

## Physical Therapy Board of California

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# The Laws & Regulation Governing Physical Therapist Assistants

### **Business and Professions Code Section 2655.2. Number of Assistants Supervised**

A physical therapist shall not supervise more physical therapist assistants at any one time than in the opinion of the board can be adequately supervised. Two physical therapist assistants shall be the maximum number of physical therapist assistants supervised by a physical therapist at any one time, but the board may permit the supervision of a greater number by a physical therapist if, in the opinion of the board, there would be adequate supervision and the public's health and safety would be served. In no case, however, shall the total number of physical therapist assistants exceed twice the number of physical therapists regularly employed by a facility at any one time.

### **Business and Professions Code Section 2655.7. Practice Authorized**

Notwithstanding Section 2630, a physical therapist assistant may assist in the provision of physical therapy service provided the assistance is rendered under the supervision of a physical therapist licensed by the board.

### **Title 16, California Code of Regulations Section 1398.44 Adequate Supervision Defined**

A licensed physical therapist shall at all times be responsible for all physical therapy services provided by the physical therapist assistant. The supervising physical therapist has continuing responsibility to follow the progress of each patient, provide direct care to the patient and to assure that the physical therapist assistant does not function autonomously. Adequate supervision shall include all of the following:

- (a) The supervising physical therapist shall be readily available in person or by telecommunication to the physical therapist assistant at all times while the physical therapist assistant is treating patients. The supervising physical therapist shall provide periodic on site supervision and observation of the assigned patient care rendered by the physical therapist assistant.
- (b) The supervising physical therapist shall initially evaluate each patient and document in the patient record, along with his or her signature, the evaluation and when the patient is to be reevaluated.
- (c) The supervising physical therapist shall formulate and document in each patient's record, along with his or her signature, the treatment program goals and plan based upon the evaluation and any other information available to the supervising physical therapist. This information shall be communicated verbally, or in writing by the supervising physical therapist to the physical therapist assistant prior to initiation of treatment by the physical therapist assistant. The supervising physical therapist shall determine which elements of the treatment plan may be assigned to the physical therapist assistant. Assignment of these responsibilities must be commensurate with the qualifications, including experience, education and training, of the physical therapist assistant.
- (d) The supervising physical therapist shall reevaluate the patient as previously determined, or more often if necessary, and modify the treatment goals and plan as needed. The reevaluation shall include treatment to the patient by the supervising physical therapist. The reevaluation shall be documented and signed by the supervising physical therapist in the patient's record and shall reflect the patient's progress toward the treatment goals and when the next reevaluation shall be performed.
- (e) The physical therapist assistant shall document each treatment in the patient record, along with his or her signature. The physical therapist assistant shall document in the patient record and notify the supervising physical therapist of any change in the patient's condition not consistent with planned progress or treatment goals. The change in condition necessitates a reevaluation by a supervising physical therapist before further treatment by the physical therapist assistant.
- (f) Within seven (7) days of the care being provided by the physical therapist assistant, the supervising physical therapist shall review, cosign and date all documentation by the physical therapist assistant or conduct a weekly case conference and document it in the patient record. Cosigning by the supervising physical therapist indicates that the supervising physical therapist has read the documentation, and unless the supervising physical therapist indicates otherwise, he or she is in agreement with the contents of the documentation.
- (g) There shall be a regularly scheduled and documented case conference between the supervising physical therapist and physical therapist assistant regarding the patient. The frequency of the conferences is to be determined by the supervising physical therapist based on the needs of the patient, the supervisory needs of the physical therapist assistant and shall be at least every thirty calendar days.
- (h) The supervising physical therapist shall establish a discharge plan. At the time of discharge, or within 7 (seven) days thereafter, a supervising physical therapist shall document in the patient's record, along with his or her signature, the patient's response to treatment in the form of a reevaluation or discharge summary.

NOTE: Authority cited: Sections 2615, 2655.1 and 2655.92, Business and Professions Code. Reference: Section 2655.92, Business and Professions Code.